

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

April 6, 1964

Invoices and Ledgers

Mrs. Mille Birks presented several books and other articles to the Monterey History and Art Association a number of years ago, that they might be preserved for future generations to study and appreciate the historical contribution Monterey made to these United States.

Before listing the documents presented by Mrs. Birks, a resume of the story of the finding of the letters, papers, books and magazines may prove entertaining.

Some years ago Mrs. Birks, when she was a young woman, saw a group of boys tearing up old papers and playing in a vacant lot on Calle Principal. A house was being demolished and cases of old things were being thrown out. She thought that maybe some day these things would be valuable and should be preserved for Monterey, so she sent her husband with a wheelbarrow to bring a load home. They were stored in her aunt's old home, and not again disturbed for many years, until the opening of her son's key shop necessitated changes in the old building at Tyler and Scott, now scheduled for demolition by Urban Renewal.

Mrs. Birks' aunt and uncle were Captain and Mrs. Thomas Lambert. Captain Lambert was in charge of the Custom House and it was there that Mrs. Birks lived as a young girl.

Mrs. Lambert, who had a little wooden building at the point of Calle Principal and Alvarado streets, where she sold seashells and seaweed to the tourist trade, had collected a group of old heavy books in which she pressed seaweed. These are also included in the collection. That little one-story building was later moved to Scott and Tyler streets and became the key shop hoisted up to make a second story.

There are ten volumes of store records; one record book of the recorder of Monterey dated 1851; four stamp dies for embroidery work made by Captain Lambert; one old match holder from the Washington Hotel; seven old copies of Harpers, Overland Monthly, and The Popular; a book on Monterey in the 1870's and 1880's and four books of Rules & Regulations in 1840's.

The cash book covers cash records from June 3, 1851 to October 30, 1852. The invoice book covers the period from June 3, 1851 to Nov. 1, 1852. From it we have

learned that from June 3, 1851, to April, 1852, William Curtis and Milton Little were partners, but in April, 1852, they dissolved their partnership, and it was probably then that Milton Little established his own store and Curtis continued alone.

The day-books and ledgers cover the period from May 1853 to 1867. Some volumes are missing, but in those we have a story of Monterey which has not yet been written. Stores of that period acted often in the present capacity of a bank. There are records of transaction for board and room, real estate deals, shipping records and records of wharf income.

Ledger A is almost as good as a census of Monterey, except that the customers were mainly the citizens of American extraction, while the names of the older Spanish and Mexican families are not as prevalent for the first year.

The Little family were customers: Milton Little, Jane Little, a sister who had been a schoolteacher, and later went to Texas where she taught for many years; Louis Little, a brother who died in 1858. One of the last entries in his account is dated November 20, 1859, "To cash for digging grave, \$6.00."

There are accounts for ships that sailed into Monterey and coastwise ports, and from Santa Cruz and San Francisco.